

Recommendations for Bilingual Spanish-English Wayside Exhibits

Language

Level: Aim for an understandable international Spanish vocabulary, similar to what we hear on news broadcasts on the major international television cable channels, such as *Univisión* or *Telemundo* or *CNN Español*.

Readability: Wayside exhibits are commonly read aloud by one member of a family for the others to hear. Try for a Spanish text that will be easy to pronounce while reading aloud. Sentences in Spanish may be longer than the English original so that the harsh, choppy effect often seen in many literal translations can be avoided. However, the combining of phrases should not become so complex as to become challenging to read aloud.

Literalness: Clarity of meaning and elegance of phrasing are far more important than matching the word order or exact phrasing of the original English. Readers who read no English should be fully intellectually engaged by the combination of image and Spanish texts on each exhibit.

Titles: Have the translator / contractor spend extra time on making the titles interesting and engaging, while remaining concise. This is a difficult challenge, but well worth the effort. The titles **do not have to match** in the two languages! Look for powerful alternatives in Spanish that will draw readers quickly into the message. Many visitors will look at the wayside's image and read only the title, so strong titles are critical.

Brevity: Let your translator / contractor know that wayside texts should average around 120 words or less. Most minor captions should be only a sentence or two. Understanding that Spanish normally requires 140% of the text line length of English texts, translators should strive to maintain brevity and focus. Rigorously edit out any fluff that doesn't have to be translated.

Preempt

Challenging

Terms: Animal and plant names can turn into time-wasting translation quagmires. The same animal/plant will likely have multiple names in different Spanish-speaking countries. Scientific names are a good alternative.

List the faunal/floral names found in your wayside project. Have the park's bilingual rangers resolve what version of that plant or animal name they normally use when talking with Spanish-speaking park visitors. Share that list with your translator / contractor. Harpers Ferry Center can help point out other vernacular English words —like URBAN SPRAWL and MOONSHINE — that have proven problematic in other projects.